DIGITAL EQUITY IN LIBRARIES
SHAUNA EDSON, CITY LIBRARY

DEFINITIONS

Digital equity is when everyone can easily access and use technologies to communicate, learn, work, and play.

The Digital Divide is the gap between those who have affordable access, skills, and support to effectively engage online and those who do not (NDIA).

Digital Inclusion is the work we need to do to achieve digital equity, and it must evolve as technology advances.

DIGITAL LITERACY

Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

Source: ALA Digital Literacy Task Force

A DIGITALLY LITERATE PERSON

- Possesses the variety of skills – technical and cognitive – required to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information in a wide variety of formats;

- Is able to use diverse technologies appropriately and effectively to retrieve information, interpret results, and judge the quality of that information;

- Understands the relationship between technology, life-long learning, personal privacy, and stewardship of information;

- Uses these skills and the appropriate technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, colleagues, family, and on occasion, the general public; and

- Uses these skills to actively participate in civic society and contribute to a vibrant, informed, and engaged community.

Source: NDIA

"...Our nation's public libraries serve as critical infrastructure for bridging digital divides, empowering lifelong learning, and advancing economic recovery."

Melanie Huggins, PLA President, 2021

2020 PUBLIC LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

In addition to broadband access, libraries play an essential role in advancing digital literacy:

More than 88% of all public libraries offer formal or informal digital literacy programming.

More than one-third (36.7%) of public libraries have dedicated digital literacy and technology programs and training staff.

More than one in five libraries provide classes or informal help related to coding, computer programming, robotics, and 3D printing.

Source: American Libraries

DIGITAL EQUITY AT THE CITY LIBRARY

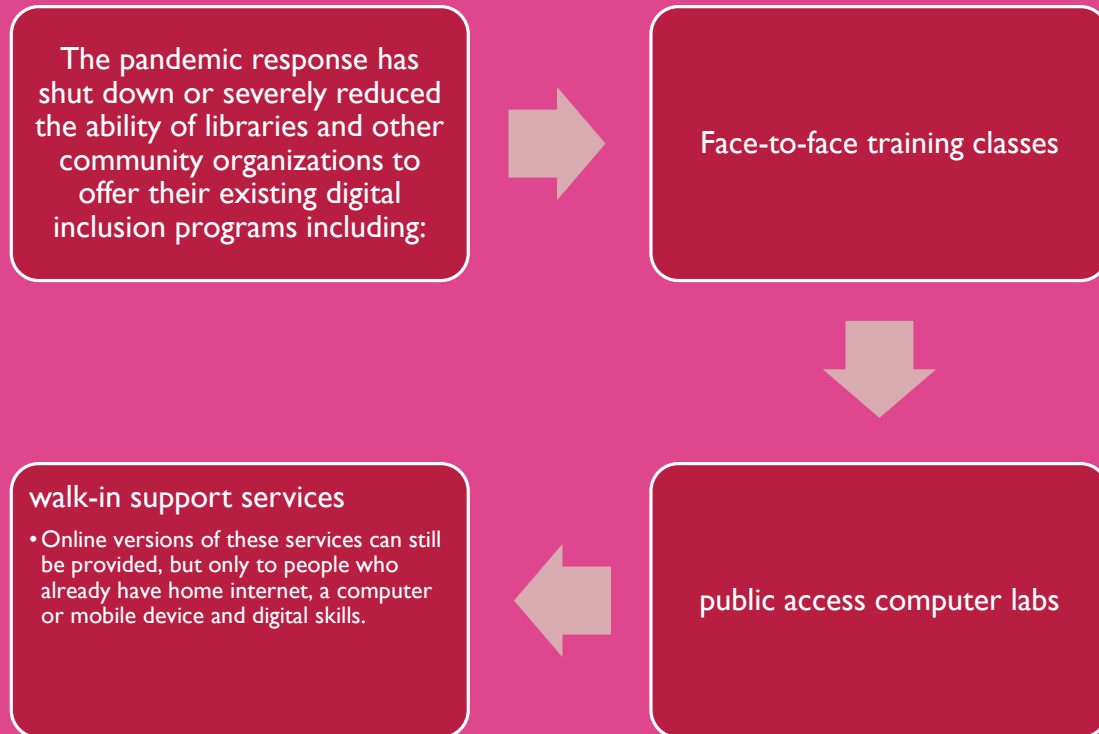# WHY IS DIGITAL EQUITY WORK SO CHALLENGING FOR LIBRARIES?

A service

A program

Requires a lens on equity, diversity, and inclusion

Specialized tech skills

GROWING NEED FOR DIGITAL EQUITY

The pandemic response has shut down or severely reduced the ability of libraries and other community organizations to offer their existing digital inclusion programs including:

Face-to-face training classes

public access computer labs

walk-in support services

- Online versions of these services can still be provided, but only to people who already have home internet, a computer or mobile device and digital skills.

DIGITAL NAVIGATOR

The Digital Navigator service model helps libraries and community-based organizations address the new and intensified digital access barriers resulting from COVID-19.

WHAT IS A DIGITAL NAVIGATOR?

Digital navigators are trusted guides who assist community members in internet adoption and the use of computing devices. Digital navigation services include ongoing assistance with affordable internet access, device acquisition, technical skills, and application support.

Source: NDIA

DIRECT SERVICE: SUCCESS FOR THE PROJECT

Participants meet their stated personal connectivity and digital adoption goals through their engagement with Digital Navigators.

- Did the participant get a home internet connection, if that was needed?

- Was the participant able to carry out schoolwork online?

- Submit unemployment compensation reports?

- Schedule and complete an online healthcare appointment?

- Bank online?

- Attend a streamed church service?

DIGITAL NAVIGATORS

HOW DID WE DETERMINE OUR FOCUS COMMUNITIES?

- In March of 2020, the City Library and other public computer labs in Salt Lake City closed indefinitely.

- To better understand the community members that would most benefit from support for digital resources, SLCPL worked with the NDIA to research digital equity in Salt Lake City.

- The team looked at census data, state data, and local media to determine the least digital connectivity, device ownership, hardship due to the pandemic, and Covid positivity rates.

- Based on their research, the team identified the three neighborhoods of Glendale, Poplar Grove and Rose Park, as in most need of digital inclusion support.

DIGITAL NAVIGATORS

HOW HAVE WE CONNECTED WITH OUR COMMUNITIES TO MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE?

- Local and multilingual staff

- Multilingual marketing materials

  - Bookmarks and Yard signs

- Word of Mouth

- Doorhanger campaign

  - SLCPL staff walked an estimated 220 miles throughout Poplar Grove, Rose Park, and Glendale

- Community partner organizations with deep roots in the community

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

For the Digital Navigator project, SLCPL collaborated with three essential community organizations who each had one full-time Digital Navigator.

The Library determined the following qualifiers for community-based organizations to form a mutually beneficial partnership with on this project:

- a trusted organization with deep roots in these three neighborhoods,
- currently offering bilingual or multilingual programs with a lens on digital equity,
- capacity to support a full-time digital navigator position,
- and a commitment to work remotely or in-person with community members during the pandemic.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR…

- Most people in our focus communities need devices.
- We saw a rise in folks requesting support for in-home broadband after our doorhanger campaign in our focus communities.
- Ongoing support and relationships matter.
- Get out in the community!
- Remote services reach individuals that are not able to access in-person services.
  - We plan to continue some form of remote services after in-person services resume.

DIGITAL
NAVIGATORS

He needs a computer that would be able to help him with his home T-shirt design business, having a computer available for his kids at home is an added bonus.

Paron is a resident at a senior center near the main library and was used to being able to go into Main for assistance before Covid. He was very grateful to have support at home.

She needed a computer for her to pay bills online. She works two jobs and sometimes doesn't have time to go out and pay bills and so with the computer she will be able to pay bills online.

Was not able to easily access Workforce services without having to go to the library for computer access. Due to the pandemic he was struggling to find resources that were available. Now he is able to do everything more easily from home.

I am very happy for your help, I was very frustrated trying to look for a job. When I went in to jobs it was all through the computers. Thank you for your help. I had a job interview and will start working on Monday. Thank you so much.

He lost everything and needed to get his life back. His whole social life was based around WOW and other social games. He is happy to have a connection back.

Helped the client getting a library account and guided him through the website and also showed him how to use English learning website muzzy.com

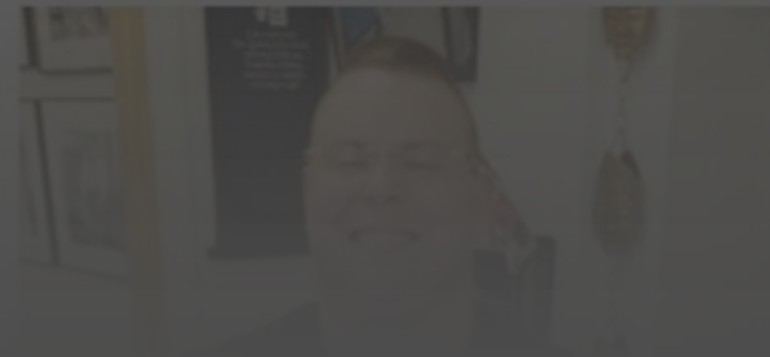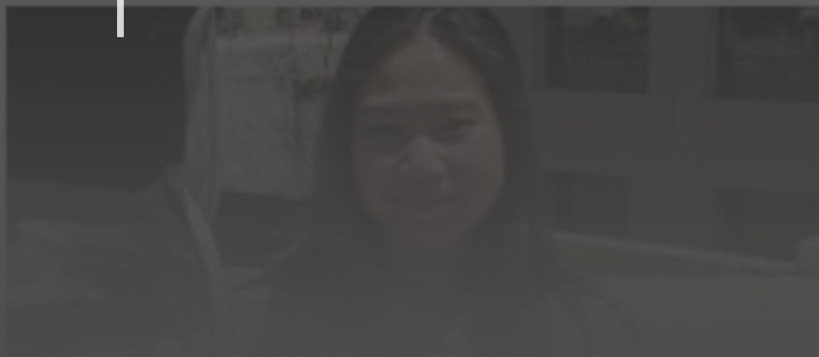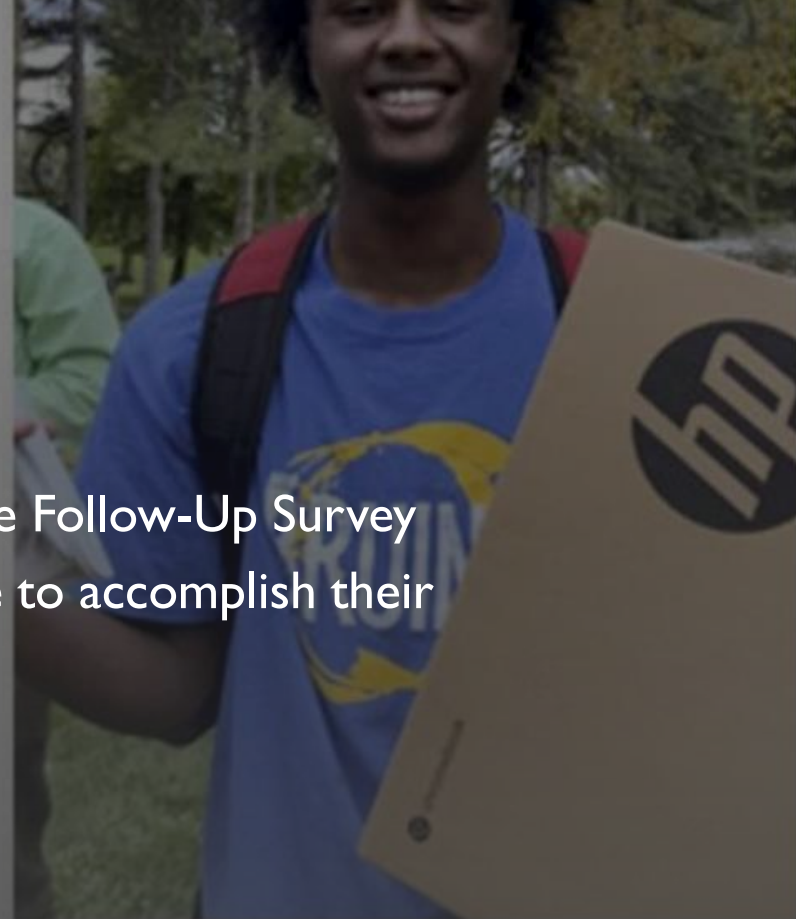# WAS THE PROJECT SUCCESSFUL?

WAS THE PROJECT SUCCESSFUL?

- 86.67% of respondents to the Follow-Up Survey reported that they were able to accomplish their digital literacy goals.

- 365 Devices Distributed

- 585 Individuals Supported

MEETING AND REQUESTS TO SHARE OUT THE DN MODEL

- Connecticut State Library (12.2020)

San Diego City

King County Library System

NTEN (Digital Inclusion Fellows (3.10.2021)

Columbus Metropolitan Library (3.2021)

San Diego Futures Foundation (7.2021)

Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (3.2021)

Chicago Public Library (4.2021)

Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition in Ohio (6.2021)

Texas State Library (6.2021)

South Salt Lake (6.2021)

BEST PRACTICES FOR A SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL NAVIGATOR PROJECT

DIGITAL NAVIGATOR TOOLKIT

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance and the Salt Lake City Public Library created the [toolkit](#) to support organizations looking to start their own Digital Navigator projects.

TECH LAB REIMAGINED

The Tech Lab aims to support patrons in achieving their digital literacy goals, provide personalized instruction and navigate digital spaces, and provide space and programming for technology-based programming.

- Closed the Tech Lab space as a general computer lab, and reserving the current Tech Lab space for computer classes and group reservations

- Roaming Tech staff provide digital skill support

UPCOMING DIGITAL EQUITY FUNDING

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

- Digital Equity Act: **$2.75 Billion (over 5 years)**
  - $60 million for state planning grants
    - Goes to State Digital Equity Planning Administration Agency
  - $1.44 billion for state implementation grants
    - Sub-grantee to support State Digital Equity Plan
  - $1.25 billion ($250 million a year for 5 years) for competitive grant program
    - Anchor Institutions may apply

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION